



News Release

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Utah Students Challenged to Tell The TRUTH About Tobacco

4th through 12th grade students invited to enter anti-tobacco contests

SALT LAKE CITY – The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) is asking 4th through 12th grade students to use their creativity to tell The TRUTH about tobacco by entering one of two annual contests. 4th and 5th grade students can enter the Truth from Youth Anti-tobacco Advertising Contest from today until March 7, 2008. Junior, middle and high school students can enter Real Noise until March 28, 2008.

The UDOH Tobacco Prevention and Control Program (TPCP) is holding the 10th annual Truth from Youth Anti-tobacco Advertising Contest to encourage youth to teach each other about the dangers of tobacco and help them make the decision to stay tobacco free. 4th and 5th grade students may enter by drawing or writing a billboard, TV or radio ad that tells The TRUTH about tobacco. The TRUTH campaign will make presentations to youth at schools across the state to encourage participation. Last year, more than 3,400 Utah 4th and 5th grade students entered. More information is available at www.youthagainsttobacco.com.

Dallin Marshall, now a junior at Vernal High School, won first place in the billboard category in 2003. “Because I was part of the contest years ago, it’s been easier for me to say no to tobacco. I want other kids to see through the smoke and not be manipulated by the tobacco industry’s advertisements,” says Marshall.

Open to junior high, middle and high school students, Real Noise encourages students and their friends to create and conduct an anti-tobacco activity in their communities. All groups qualify: student bodies, groups of friends, sports teams and clubs. The winning group will receive \$1,000 and a concert for their entire school; 2nd and 3rd place each receive \$250. Last year, 20 groups submitted entries. More information is available at www.warriorsagainsttobacco.com.

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“Last year, our student government and governing youth council held a ‘kick smoking in the butt’ week, with activities every day at lunch, an assembly, posters and daily announcements,” says Danna Esplin, student council advisor at Cedar High. “We were happy and surprised that we won and happy that our students now know tobacco can ruin your life.”

“We continue to hold contests where youth can tell others about the dangers of tobacco because they are effective,” said Lena Dibble, marketing coordinator for the TPCP. “Programs such as these have helped bring Utah’s youth smoking rate down to 7.4 percent—the lowest in the nation.”

Utah’s high school students are three times less likely to smoke than their peers nationwide. Thirty-eight percent fewer high school students smoke today than they did during the campaign’s early days in 1999. However, every day more than 1,500 people nationally under the age of 18 become regular smokers. About half of them will eventually die from a tobacco-related disease. Ninety percent of people start smoking before the age of 19 and most teens who smoke say they would not have started if they could do it over again. Nearly 190,000 Utahns continue to smoke cigarettes, and more than 1,100 Utahns die annually as a result of their own smoking.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public’s health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.